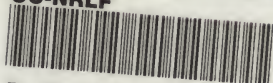


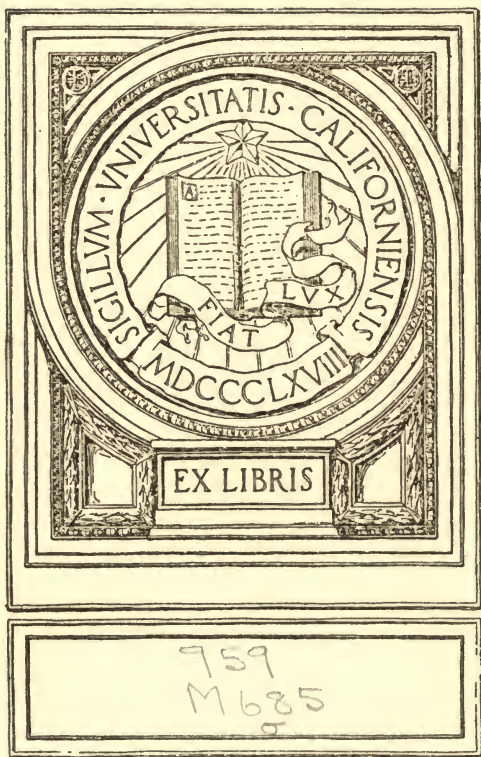
# OUT of MIST

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Florence Kilpatrick Mixter











OUT OF MIST



# OUT OF MIST

*By*

*Florence Kilpatrick Mixter*

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OUT OF MIST  
A SONNET SEQUENCE



# I

PREMONITORY winds are at my door  
And restive buds tap on my window-pane;  
Through drifting clouds the hazy sunbeams pour  
Their grateful presage of oncoming rain.  
Within my room the April air is still;  
No tremor stirs the roses at my side.  
The shadows gather gently till they fill  
The walls about me with a dusk world-wide.  
And now grows faint the throbbing pulse of Spring.  
Drenched buds sink down in elemental rest. . . .  
Lo! spectral, through the stillness dark, you fling  
The rainbow blossoms of the troubled west!  
Each flower among them soon must fade and die,  
Were they not all dream-wrought—thrown from the sky.

## II

THESE hours are legendary; they shall pass  
Like shadows of the April afternoon  
That weave bright arabesques upon the grass  
To fade on the dark dial of the moon. . . .  
Long have I heard with mute, incredible wonder,  
Your voice above Spring's low accompaniment.  
Now, to the drum-beat of receding thunder,  
You come—as though with your heart's turmoil spent.  
Farewell to dreams! bright shadows unreturning  
Across the lovely dial of the sun!  
Over the day of their far-vistaed yearning  
The twilight falls upon the play begun! . . .  
What winds of Heaven now whisper on our lips? . . .  
Pale in the sky the silent bow-moon dips.

### III

WHY bid me say what you must know so well  
That faltering speech of mine must but confuse?  
What is there that my whispered words can tell  
So truly as my every futile ruse?  
Did not the smiling mask I wore so long  
Prove but a banner of the war within?  
Could studied silence smother all the song  
That deafened me with its tumultuous din?  
How did I seek to screen from out my sight  
Those blinding rays from your compelling eyes!  
And how I fought to quench the answering light  
That from the glad fires of my soul would rise!  
Ah! must you still look down and bid me speak?  
What is it in my heart—or yours—you seek?

## IV

BEAUTY be praised for this white hour when I  
May tell my love! The storm has left no cloud  
To mar the glory of the twilit sky,  
And, radiant as the evening star, and proud,  
I take your hand that soon shall lead me out  
To undiscovered dawns! The road that lay  
Before us had no turning; past all doubt  
I follow now where you shall lead the way.  
Ah, let the long years bring us what they will  
Of paling stars or music that recedes!  
Faith that is born tonight shall ever fill  
The dusk—though unknown morrows teach new creeds.  
For we have been as children—gay or sad  
Together. But, together, somehow glad.

## V

WHAT strange sweet gesture of remembering earth  
Shall make this twilight spell forever ours  
When, on momentous tides, it has re-birth  
In fragrant miracle of wind-tossed flowers?  
Perhaps a sudden onslaught of bright rain,  
Like fury of the unleashed dreams of day,  
Will beat again upon the window-pane,  
In tune with flute notes calling us away.  
Then, hearing the far-echoing thunder's roll—  
Across whatever gulf of joy or tears—  
We shall recall such treasure as the soul  
May look upon once in a thousand years;  
Seeing the garden that, enchanted, slept  
Until Love came—dusk-shadowed and rain-swept.

## VI

WHEN I had told my love, you slowly said,  
“Go, dear! while strength is yours to turn away.”  
And yet I could not think that hope was dead  
That had not lived for even one short day.  
At length you said, “Go now, before I mar  
This holy hour with omens that your heart  
Would vainly disavow—and from afar  
Remember one white moment here apart.”  
But, unafraid,—almost impatiently,  
I heard you speak; nor even tried to guess  
The import of this sudden mystery  
That had no place amid such loveliness.  
And when at last you turned and kissed my hair  
Your sombre words melted like summer air.

## VII

How glad I was! How light and swift my wings  
That soared above the clouds, above the blue;  
Above the memory of all earthly things  
I seemed at last alone with God and you.  
Did you fly with me? I shall never know  
What mists obscured your vision; what faint cry  
Came up to you from regions far below.  
Ah! how I strove to make you see the sky  
That trembled limitless before my sight—  
Horizonless, unbounded, then at last  
Melting into a universe of light!  
Did you see aught of it before it passed? . . .  
You do not answer, but, across your eyes,  
Trail the dim mists of a lost Paradise.

## VIII

THEN, as you turned and spoke a strange good-bye,  
I seemed to hear within your voice a note  
Of last decision, piercing the bright sky. . . .  
Alone, there came a fear that clutched my throat  
Until I could no longer see the light,  
But needs must blindly creep back to your side  
To find you safe.—Safe! and with eyes alight  
Because your fantasies could so misguide  
My trust that I should think the words you said  
Were true; forgetting all in that belief  
Save that I loved, and that you might be dead.  
And you! You only smiled at my poor grief! . . .  
Ah, was it triumph of the actor's rôle?  
Or had I guessed aright your desperate soul?

## IX

How shall I learn to live with this strange love  
That has no place among the things I know?  
For it is like a dream wherein I move  
Upon a sea in whose strong undertow  
I must succumb, save for some power of will  
To battle with uncharted streams of death.  
Ofttimes I struggle to recall that still  
And brooding day when, with confiding breath,  
I reached across the drifting sands to you  
Whose strength was rock. But ah! how suddenly  
That whirling cloud from out the unbroken blue  
Swept us, unmindful, to the open sea,  
Where, on relentless tides, moon-piloted,  
We drift to shores of the forgotten dead.

## X

WERE we so prodigal of joy that Fate  
Grew tired of counting off the lovely hours  
Whose sunlit vistas reached to Heaven? Too late  
We saw the storm descending on our flowers  
Long-gathered. I could only give one cry;  
And then my soul was dumb and very still. . . .  
But you, relentless of what now might die  
If you should speak, proclaimed your angry will  
With all the fierce magnificence of youth.  
And as I heard and tried to steel my heart  
We suddenly smiled! Ah, then in very truth  
We saw a thousand sparkling blossoms start  
Where one had been! I know not what we said  
But only how the sunlight touched your head.

## XI

WHAT place is there for me in your life's dream?  
Is there a moment in a single day  
When, at the far horizon's rim, I seem  
A flashing sail upon the ocean's grey?  
Comes there a time when dusk is hanging near,  
With all the sky aflame in dying light,  
That, of the racing cloud-shapes, I appear  
The one swift-changing cloud of your delight?  
And sometimes, when the dawn is shot with rose  
And shimmering veils of mist obscure the sea,  
Perhaps within your lonely heart there grows  
A moment's all-engulfing need of me? . . .  
Strange! Once I had no troubling wish to know.  
But was that not a hundred years ago?

## XII

ALL through the night I lie and think of you  
Who leave me dumb with inarticulate pain  
Where nightmare shadows pass in dim review  
Down the dark corridors of my numb brain.  
Now I grope blindly for the lover, dead  
To my imagining; in wide-eyed fear  
Travel the paths that once unswerving led  
To him; but find him not; nor any tear  
To blur the slow grey dawn. In vain I toss  
From image upon image of this you  
I do not know; then wonder if your loss  
Of me could ever throb the whole night through?  
No! Pitiless, you seem, still unaware  
Of ghostly shapes that rise up everywhere.

### XIII

WHAT words of sleeping consciousness beguile  
Our hearts wherein was once no need for speech?  
Better to part with one remembering smile  
Than stare with empty eyes; while spirits reach,  
Like mist-swept mountain peaks, to part the clouds  
That hide them from the sky. . . . I would forget  
The meaningless conflict; rend the smothering shrouds  
Of pride; kill base distrust or vain regret  
Rather than stifle thought of mine or yours;  
Tear down the veils of mystery, and dare  
To look for hate, or love that still endures  
Beyond the tomb. . . . Ah! I would most beware  
Of cruel artifice that now denies  
The love we knew when truth spoke from our eyes!

## XIV

How readily the dreaming mind forgives  
The scar that glows relentlessly by day  
And, in forgetfulness of pain, re-lives  
The undimmed beauty of a far-off May.  
Thus tenderly you came to me last night  
And for one sleeping heart-beat held me near. . . .  
One heart-beat whose far echo of delight  
It seemed must ring from sphere to answering sphere.  
Then suddenly I woke and you were gone  
And once again the scar burned livid red.  
How profitless my dream when with the dawn  
I waken with a heart uncomforted  
And, searching, know not if I grieve for hate  
Or for a love that Hell cannot abate.

## XV

SILENCE is bitter; yet what word of mine  
Would reach you now? What miracle could break  
The heavy doors that bitterly confine  
Your spirit? What remembering smile could wake  
The beauty that is dead? . . . All, all must fail  
Only to bring us both to overthrow. . . .  
No need to tell me that my words are pale  
In your tense sight, and that my touch is slow  
To heal your heart that would forever kill  
The form it fashioned! Even my eyes allow  
A quick defeat before your blinding will  
And I at last am weaponless. Ah, now  
Be swift in your unkindness. . . . Strike one blow  
That shall release me. . . . With that kindness, go!

## XVI

IN the pale languor of some sultry noon,  
A brooding aeon since we said good-bye,  
Would you, I wonder, on this day of June,  
Unseal my letter with an ominous sigh?  
Fearing the words therein might break the spell  
Of moments we should never again know?  
Fearing that I who once had loved so well  
Might speak a language that you did not know?  
Or rather, from these casual words of mine,  
So unperturbed—save where the thought is broken—  
Would you not read into each barren line  
The love that, once at dusk, my lips had spoken;  
And, dreaming, hold that memory to your heart  
As you would me—were we not worlds apart?

## XVII

If you sat here beside me, dear, tonight  
We should not talk as we were wont to do;  
Your coming would put every thought to flight  
And it would be enough to smile at you!  
Ah! we should watch the April sun go down  
Beyond the long stretch of the river's flow,  
And, turning, see the small lights of the town,  
A-kindle with our dreams of long ago.  
And you perhaps would reach to take my hand—  
For it is long, so long, since we have met—  
And each has been in a grey, wintry land,  
And for one shining hour we should forget! . . . . ,  
Alone, I watch the mimic lamps burn bright.  
For you are not beside me, dear, tonight.

## XVIII

THINK not that I was slow to understand.  
I have not loved you merely for a day. . . .  
Your moods to me were countless grains of sand  
That I have held and then seen slip away.  
And I have loved you for so much that's wise;  
For laughter; tenderness like summer rain;  
For slowly wakened passion that defies  
The short-lived beauty of its cruel reign.  
And there are times I think I loved you best  
When you seemed but a tired child of mine  
Who came to me perplexed, or seeking rest  
When shadows lengthened at the sun's decline.  
But now that you are gone my eyes behold  
Your flaming soul—before unguessed, untold.

## XIX

TONIGHT no moon shines through the poplar trees;  
The stars are pale before the coming storm.  
And like a flash of sleeping memories  
Swift lightning floods each cloud's awakening form.  
The dark earth crouches underneath my feet,  
And breath of clover scents the parching air;  
Tonight, though you are far, our spirits meet  
Across a chaos reaching everywhere. . . .  
This is the hour when prophecies are rife  
And for our pain the ancient gods atone  
With respite of one winged hour of life  
When love, defiant, rushes to its own.  
This is the hour when lightning-riven skies  
Sear with white flame the cold earth that denies.

## XX

I DREAMED that, loving you again, I died,  
And now my heart, once desolate and cold  
As moonlit snow, in sudden wonder cried  
“This is the land of our desire! Behold  
The desert is aglow with jewelled light  
And I see Beauty’s face mirrored afar  
Upon the drifting sands!” . . . But darkest night  
Was round about you and from your dim star  
You answered “No! for now your love is done  
And this is but mirage whose pale shapes drift  
Across an empty sky.” . . . But as a nun  
Perceives her God I had seen Beauty lift  
Her lowered eyes that, from eternal May,  
Assigned to us one last and lovely day.

## XXI

WHY should I wonder that my song grows dull  
And meaningless when to the minor key  
Of my dead dreams I sing? Now in the lull  
That ushers in this long feared day I see  
No light to guide me, and I stand alone  
With only silence, silence at my side.  
Where late was such a sun as never shone  
Dread darkness and the swift in-coming tide  
Have found me on the quicksands, where I seem  
To slip from you at every step. So long  
Have I been calling you, at last, I dream  
That you are come. . . . But it is my own song  
I hear—and now I know its joyful cry  
Is but the echo from a phantom sky.

## XXII

THIS is more beauty than the soul can bear,  
And I am faint with so much loveliness.  
Not Eden itself would seem one half so fair  
Were not my heart a thirsting wilderness.  
Through terraced lights that hide among the trees  
I wander to the moonlit lake below,  
And, dazed and wondering, my spirit flees  
Before a gladness I shall never know. . . .  
Dim, rippling laughter from a still canoe;  
Soft strains of music from the halls above;  
Gay lights upon the mirrored lake—and you—  
All mingled in a phantasy of love. . . .  
Hush! Can it be your flute-call that I hear?  
Now far away . . . Now ever drawing near . . .

## XXIII

AN, once-beloved, is it you who come?  
And is it I who give a pallid hand?  
Beneath your silent gaze my eyes are dumb. . . .  
We are two strangers in an alien land!  
And who more courteous than we who dine  
And, smiling, mingle with the other guests? . . .  
“Good-night,” I hear you say. Your hand takes mine  
That in your tightening clasp all-yielding rests.  
Now, in a flash, I know that you are you,  
Though still a shadow-shape but dimly seen;  
Ghost of a flaming dream, come suddenly true;  
Lover of old—and yet with altered mien. . . .  
“Good-night,” I whisper—but the glad stars burn  
With radiant promise of your swift return!

## XXIV

At last we are alone and all is still  
Save for the crackle of the great birch log  
Whose silver strength is spent in flame to fill  
Our hearts with light and laughter. The white fog  
That hung so mournfully now slowly lifts  
Above the western hills; dark hills where gold  
Of dying sunset filters through the rifts,  
In jewelled shapes my dreaming had foretold. . . .  
And I, who ever wondered why the soul  
Knows beauty to be more than all it seems,  
Now find within your eyes its eager goal  
And know your arms the destiny of dreams. . . .  
And if life hold no other hour than this  
I am content—remembering your kiss.

## XXV

THERE is a calm that broods above the soul  
As broods grey mist above an unquiet sea.  
It is the calm that takes its ultimate toll  
Out of the heart's last bitter agony.  
Thus, high above the treachery of tears,  
Above the night of all-enveloping gloom,  
Above the desolation of long years,  
I heard the quiet presage of your doom.  
Then to my listening heart there suddenly came  
The far-off echo of undying hours;  
Down vistas of despair our love's white flame  
Revealed one kingdom that was wholly ours. . . .  
I seemed again in that enchanted land  
Where we had dreamed at twilight, hand in hand.

## XXVI

No bitterness shall ever drown this night  
Wherein I came to know that we must part.  
Beloved, like a bird in soaring flight,  
You brought me all the passion of your heart.  
Ah! it was Heaven just to feel you near,  
Like holy stillness at the birth of dawn;  
And it was your own soul you brought me, here  
Where I still count the hours since you are gone.  
Again I feel your lips upon my brow,  
And hands that reach to clasp about your head  
Fall heavy at my side; more heavy now  
At living dawn than when they shall lie dead. . . .  
But I who found you in that last good-bye  
Shall hold one golden image till I die.

## XXVII

IN memory I sit beside your bed  
And see again the smile that lit your face;  
Nor do the slow forgetful years erase  
A syllable of those last words we said.  
For, through my tears, seeing your brightness fled  
Because of them, I plead with Heaven for grace  
To make you smile once more, while with quick pace  
I heard night passing that would leave you dead.  
Swiftly I took your hand and held it tight,  
Then told in words that choked me ever after  
Some foolish trifling thing. And though the light  
That came with your brave laugh was gone thereafter,  
Yet, as a rocket fills the quiet night  
With falling stars, I hear again your laughter.

## XXVIII

WHERE shall I find you, gone across the mist  
Of deep oblivion? Gestures that were you  
Fade from my sight, yet hauntingly persist  
In the slow-falling leaf. . . . The voice I knew  
Is silent till I hear its overtones  
In cadence of the wind. . . . Though Beauty cries  
From every scarlet hill that now enthrones  
Your spirit, no bewildering disguise  
That you may wear shall lure me from the thrill  
Of your swift smile. . . . Nor shall I ever tire  
Of seeking you—who once were and are still—  
The appalling vision of my soul's desire.  
For, out of mist, I shall at last discover  
The unchanging you—dear strange immortal lover!

## XXIX

HERE in the sanctuary of my dreams,  
How many a bud shall flower when I am dead!  
Ah, my beloved, even now it seems  
As if they bent and swayed above my head.  
What though the sceptics proved that death were real  
And you were gone from me a million years  
Yet would some restless daffodil reveal  
The image God re-captured from my tears.  
And you, with silent lips forever cold,  
Might vainly seek my hand across the dark  
But some old dream would flash; that day would hold  
At dusk the promise of the rainbow's arc. . . .  
There is not any grave where love may rest  
Until illusion crumbles in earth's breast.

THE END

## TRANSFIGURATION

SILENCE is everywhere; the night is long  
With uncomplaining, and the far-off wrong  
Of earth's unkindness is forgotten now.  
Like glacier-carven rock the untroubled brow  
Looms eloquent of secret strength that folds  
The temple of the mind—a shrine that holds  
Some hidden meaning, come at last to birth  
Through tortuous pathways of relentless earth.  
Now, though the soul has fled, yet in its flight  
It has illumined in the caverned night  
An image; burned the imprint of its wings  
Into the clay, whence suddenly there springs  
New form. . . . A form that neither life nor death  
Can wholly claim; but, for one haunting breath,  
Reflecting beauty, mute and lightning-shod,  
Poised hesitant between the dust and God.

## ST. PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL

INTO the stillness of that vast retreat  
I turn from off the hot and noisy street,  
To rest a little from the deafening din,  
To drink in beauty—not repent of sin.  
Upon a shrunken crone who scrubs the floor  
Rose-filtered sunbeams from a window pour  
Transcendent splendor that might emanate  
From the high Gothic arch of Heaven's gate.  
Save for a kneeling silent form or two  
I am alone with what is false or true;  
Transfixed, I gaze upon the altar's gold  
And wait for miracles it may unfold. . . .  
The transept door swings wide and shows the sun  
Upon the steps. There children laugh and run,  
While two slip through the portals with glad rush,  
Not sobered, only awed by that deep hush  
Brooding within high dome and pillared walls  
Like captive echoes of the light foot-falls.

Swiftly they pass through long and vaulted aisle  
With eager eyes and faintly lingering smile,  
To kneel before the candle-lighted shrine  
Where Mother Mary lifts her face divine. . . .  
Then, gaily, they go forth into the sun.  
Lo! Mary smiles because they dance and run

## THE SUMMONS

SHE met him in the little college town  
Where he had gone to take a one year's course  
In scientific farming. He was tall,  
Broad-shouldered, and of sturdier, plainer stock  
Than other men she knew; yet sensitive  
Withal to her own fineness as perhaps  
No other man had ever been. His eyes,  
Direct and kind, had from the very first  
Expressed his need of her; but when the year  
Was over, he returned to his old home  
Without a word of love, and she went west  
To take up nursing.

Almost with relief  
She found herself now free from what had been  
A kind of bondage, and she wondered why  
This silent man, with his great dog-like eyes,  
Had so compelled her soul. Yet as the months

Grew into years, with only now and then  
A note or Christmas card from him, she came  
To miss him indefinably, and once,  
When Christmas passed without a line, she wept.  
Then, taking up his photograph, she tried  
To look more deeply in his eyes than she  
Had ever looked before; but no response  
To her new mood was there, and when at last  
His letter came, her heart was cold again.

\* \* \* \* \*

Three years had passed since they had met, and he  
Had lived meanwhile upon his father's farm  
In south Vermont. She often pictured it;  
A lonely spot, made lonelier still by fact  
That he was close related to one man  
Of every five in this wide valley, yet  
Was alien to them all. His father's wish—  
That this, his eldest son, should follow him—

Was law to such a nature as his own  
And so he blindly toiled upon the farm  
Where generations of his forebears slept.  
His letter in her hand, she pictured now  
The long, low farm-house, white against the green  
Of undulating fields, whose shadowy gloom  
First drew, and then repelled her joyous soul,  
Just as his lonely strength had drawn, and then  
Almost repelled her. Now at last she read  
What he had written; read it stupidly  
As if deferring comprehension while  
Again she looked upon the summer noon-day  
Of far-off fields—now wholly beautiful—  
Where he, supreme in glory of his youth,  
Awaited her. . . . Too soon the vision passed  
And slowly, word by word, some meaning came  
From those few lines of his. . . He told it with  
His stern simplicity—how he had bought  
A thrasher, hired it out, and then one day,

While trying to adjust a nut, the knife  
Had caught his arm. . . .

She went to him at once,  
Aware that no slight word of love had come  
From him, but still with certainty such as  
The gods might envy who, with laggard feet,  
Shall bring vain gifts to intercept her pain.

## DECEMBER AUGURY

STRANGELY enough, our conversation turned  
Most unexpectedly to death, and we  
Who but a moment since had laughed together  
Suddenly were still. Somehow that night  
The thought of death—which often, like a wedge  
Between two minds, cuts off communication—  
Brought us but closer. . . . Closer than the hour  
And some vague arrogance in each of us  
Had prophesied. We had not looked for this  
But thought our loneliness secure. And now,  
Too proud to show our souls, so lately clothed,  
Bereft of their poor rags, we talked of death  
As if it were a month's vacation. "Grief,"  
You said, "a lasting grief, is quite beyond  
Imagination. We experience shock  
And feel within ourselves a deep revolt  
Against some monstrous force—but actual loss

We scarcely know. There is a subtle beauty  
Deep in the very awfulness of death  
That carries with it its own anodyne.”  
I half agreed with you. At least my words  
Made but a faint protest; but far, far back  
Within my brain I knew we lied! And yet  
There, underneath the lamplight, the warm glow  
Of living joy upon us, spoken words  
Seemed to half lose their authenticity  
And it was what we felt, not what we said,  
That counted most.

Then, through the open door,  
The sound of music came with muted voice  
Of faint denial, and as if our two  
Unbending souls were suddenly aware  
That death had come to one of us, we saw  
Just how the room would look with everything  
The same, except that one would not be there.  
But still we smiled and boasted of the way

We should forget; till all at once a gleam  
Of sharp uncertainty and stabbing doubt  
Flashed from your eyes to mine. And as we looked  
And felt each other near, I tried to cry  
“Impossible!” But no words came. The music  
Ceased abruptly, and I do not know  
What you were just about to say. Our eyes  
Unsaid all that had gone before, impelled  
By might of silence that shall some day speak,  
Interpreting the emptiness of words  
To one of us alone under the lamplight.

## INVOCATION

**T**ONIGHT in sleep there came to me  
A dream where Christ walked on the sea  
And, shipwrecked, I called out, to hear  
His quiet answer "I am near."  
But when the waves had risen high  
I doubted—till I heard him cry  
"Come take my hand, beloved one,  
The long and lonely night is done.  
Fear not! and you shall walk with me,  
As Peter walked, upon the sea."

\* \* \* \* \*

Who was it called? The night is slow  
To answer, but, awake, I know  
The clutching terror of the heart  
That feels the weed-choked waters part  
And, drowning, rears a Christ who stands  
With dim-remembered outstretched hands. . .

Who knows if Peter's Christ is mine?

Like Peter, now, I ask a sign. . . .

If Christ still walks upon the sea—

\* \* \* \* \*

How calm is dawn on Galilee!

## THE DEAD

How quietly they sleep;  
How tired they must have been  
Who even now, in this wild storm,  
Do not awaken.  
What are they dreaming of  
Who lie so still beneath the waving ivy?  
Do they in their dreams, I wonder,  
Hear the thunder's crash,  
Or see the willows bend above their heads,  
Or feel the passionate warm rain,  
Like pent-up tears,  
Upon their hearts? . . .

\* \* \* \* \*

And you, dear timid one,  
Who once so feared the lightning's flash—  
Just now I hurried to pull down the shade  
To shield your startled eyes,  
And suddenly remembered  
You were sleeping there  
Among the dead.

## TO EDWARD LIVINGSTON TRUDEAU

YOUR spirit passes, but a star is born  
To burn steadfastly in the silent night  
Where single purpose kindled into light  
Your highest hopes, and living deeds adorn  
Your memory. What though our hearts are torn  
With loss? You welcomed death with eyes alight  
Who long had fought with all a soldier's might,  
And it were braver if we did not mourn.  
Now sleep is yours, beneath the balsam hills  
In whose strong healing breath, in whose repose,  
We who have loved you feel the health that fills  
Your soul. . . Great-hearted hills from which arose  
Your dream, and whence your deathless spirit wills  
That dream to rise eternal from the snows.

## SANCTUARY

How is it faith outstrips the doubting word,  
Leaving the skeptic brain in overthrow,  
And, swift as arrow from the archer's bow,  
Rises undimmed above the flight of bird?  
Today the heavy mists of doubt are stirred  
By distant currents—winds that softly blow  
As if a promise given long ago  
Were faintly whispered and as faintly heard.  
I sometimes think that high above Earth's dome  
Our hopes from turret to dream-turret soar  
And, like gray pigeons, build their nests and mate.  
There Beauty harbors them when they turn home  
From their wide circling, and forevermore  
Their sanctuary is inviolate.

## RITUAL

**K**NEEELING, I worship at that holy shrine  
Where Love returns when the Beloved is gone,  
Where night, the sea, and one dark Gothic pine  
Breathe their old covenants of golden dawn. . . .  
Again I hear the reverberant, plaintive tides  
Chanting their litanies upon the dune,  
And dream I await you where the sea divides,  
Cleft by the silver pathway of the moon. . . .  
Though, when the eastern rim of heaven pales,  
I shall arise alone, uncomforted,  
Now, like a jewelled censer, night exhales  
The incense of a dream forever dead,  
And your rapt spirit, like an organ, pours  
Its glad Hosannas on long-echoing shores.

## THE DEATH OF AN ARTIST

“I TIRE of looking at the sea,” he said.

“The composition’s bad; it needs a tree  
Within the line of vision where the red  
Of sunset pales before immensity.

There’s too much water and there’s too much sky  
Without a frame to hold them in their place,  
And not enough of shore to rest the eye  
Or any little thing to shatter space.

If I were painting it”—He suddenly smiled—

“You’d come upon it almost unaware.

Down avenues of green your soul, beguiled,  
Would yield the sea a glance and find it fair.  
How swiftly then the spirit would go free! . . .  
I tire,” he said, “of looking at the sea.”

## PROLOGUE

**P**AIN'T the sky midnight black! Hang the moon  
In the highest tree!  
Scatter the flowers of June  
Irrecoverably!

Drop three stars in a fathomless pool!  
Let a white cloud pass,  
Soft as a breeze and cool,  
Over the grass!

Leave open the rose-trellised gate  
For mad Harlequin!  
Hush! Draw the swift curtain of Fate—  
Let the play begin!

## WINTER LANDSCAPE

**T**HE winter wind is whining  
Across the furrowed snow;  
A slender light is shining  
Out from a silver bow.

Frozen beneath the moonlight,  
The long road suddenly bends. . . .  
I'll follow it some June night  
And tell you where it ends!

## THE WILD-CAT

It was midnight on the mountain side  
When the wild-cat crossed the trail;  
And I heard his padded foot-falls  
And I saw his lashing tail.

And the red light gleaming from his eyes  
Shadowed an unseen prey. . . .  
But the cold moon covered the silence  
Where a swift cry died away.

## THE BRIDGE

**H**ow beautiful the bridge tonight  
Across the wild ravine!  
How fierce the lions, tense, alight  
Beneath their marble sheen!

How golden under the lighted bridge  
The rising torrent gleams!  
How dark the purple iris ridge  
Cooled by the freshet streams!

How like a wraith the cloud that flies!  
How cold the moon that wanes!  
Ah! when will the four lions rise  
And toss their chiselled manes?

## CHINESE EPITAPH

SHE was a Manchu lady. . . .

Near the tomb where she lies

Broods an ancient Buddha, with robes of jade and of coral  
And curious lapis-blue eyes.

She was a wistful lady. . . .

When the west wind sighs

Inscrutable even as the terrible calm of Buddha  
Her impassive disguise.

She was a Manchu lady. . . .

Azure the skies

And golden the tracery sealing the proud lips of Buddha  
As the west wind dies.

## A PRINT BY HOKUSAI

OF what avail  
The tiny winds that call  
To the indifferent sea? To ships a-sail  
The twilight's silver pall  
Whispers of night  
Without one ripple stirred.  
But on the shoals three fishermen in white  
Are watching; they have heard. . . .  
How still the ships!  
So soon to feel the breath  
Of winds that rush to meet the sea's cold lips  
And fill the night with death!

## THE CANDLE

THE coverlet lies like a shroud,  
All smooth and without fold,  
Oblivious of what it drapes—  
A spirit numb with cold.

The arms are tense as if some weight,  
Long held from off the heart,  
Had slowly crushed the knotted hands  
And forced their strength apart.

Disturb him not, who come to knock  
With pity or dismay,  
Nor ask who lit the candle  
And softly stole away.

## ALL SOULS' EVE

HARK! do you hear the choral dead?  
Forgotten now their pride  
Who on this night would have us know  
They passed unsatisfied.

They shiver like the thin brown leaves  
Upon a sapless tree,  
Clinging with palsied, withered might  
To their identity.

Their voices are the unearthly winds  
That die before the dawn,  
And each one has some tale to tell  
And, having told, is gone.

\* \* \* \* \*

Ah! you who come with sea-blue eyes—  
And dead these hundred years—  
Be satisfied! I hold the cup  
Still brimming with your tears!

## THE MARRIAGE OF THE SPRUCE

SAID the spruce to the new-fallen snow

“Be my wedding gown!”

But the little winds whispered “Lo!

We will shake the snow down!”

Said the spruce to the dancing rain

“Be my silver-shod feet!”

But the little winds, coming again,

Turned the rain to sleet.

Said the spruce to the icicles “You

Are my wedding veil.”

But the sun filtered, laughing, through

And the bride turned pale.

For the sun was the bridegroom who came

With a ring of gold.

And his love was a naked flame—

As the winds had foretold.

## ESTRANGED

Is there some word  
That you or I might say  
To light the silence  
With one golden ray?

We speak with lips  
Cold or compassionate;  
Their deeper meaning  
Inarticulate.

Sometimes a flower  
Or melody of flute  
Almost reveals  
Proud spirits that are mute.

Last night in sleep  
The golden ray shone through;  
Last night I dreamed. . . .  
Ah, what are dreams to you!

## TO A YOUNG GIRL

I HAD forgotten there were hearts so young  
As yours, tonight,  
Whose voice, now echoing with songs unsung,  
Fills me with strange delight.

I had forgotten there were eyes so swift  
Of April mirth,  
Flashing as though with some invisible gift  
From Heaven to Earth.

I had forgotten there were lips that pray,  
Like a gray-winged dove,  
For one more hour of laughter and of play  
Before the holocaust of love.

## THE OLDER WISDOM

**F**AIR head and dark, beside the deep cool brook,  
Dream-light in their young eyes;  
He reads to her from out an ancient book  
Old wisdom for the wise.

And as she listens her rapt loveliness  
Casts on the dusty page  
A shadow, woven of a dream caress  
In some dim golden age.

What if, between them, like a worshipped star,  
Millions of miles away,  
The older wisdom, flashing from afar  
Could bid the dream-light stay!

## SEPTEMBER

WHO is it calls

Through the sunlit wood today?

Is it you come back from where never a dead leaf falls

On the silent way?

Where the long road bends

Do you stand waiting for me?

If I call will you come by the trail that, winding, ends

Near this blood-red tree?

Down the years that are flown,

Beloved, I whisper your name! . . .

Ah! the red leaves drip from the tree and I stand alone

In a forest of flame.

## ELEGY

THERE is one Spring,  
One April of delight,  
And all the rest is but remembering  
One moon-lit night.

Weave round its spell  
An elegy of song,  
But never think the white hawthorn can dwell  
With you for long.

It is so fair  
And delicate a thing,  
A sudden wind leaves blossoming twigs all bare  
Of covering.

White petals fall,  
Bewildered, at your feet,  
And Spring makes of the whitest flower of all  
A winding sheet.

IN MEMORY OF—

I THINK of you as one

Who often came

Close to the wooded shore to watch the sun

Go down in flame.

As one who dreamed

Until the night grew cold.

Heart of a child! For you the dark hills gleamed

With infinite gold.

As one who turned

Back to the shadowy room,

Your spirit's afterglow sole light that burned

Amid the gloom.

## CRADLE SONG

THE window makes a frame for me  
And all the stars that I can see  
Are only three.

A little square of autumn night. . . .  
Somewhere a moon, beyond my sight,  
Pours silver light

Upon a hill where dark trees keep  
A watch above Earth's heart, now deep  
In lovely sleep.

A star for you, a star for me,  
A star for love, and those bright three  
Are all I see.

## TO A CHILD

YOU are my silent laughter,  
You are my unshed tears,  
You are the elfin wonder  
Of my ecstasy and fears.

You are my heart that dances,  
You are my soul that leaps.  
You have hidden the key of the lonely room  
Where my troubled spirit sleeps.

## CHANGELING

DEAR changeling, how I love your smile,  
Fleet as a timid fawn,  
It breaks upon me suddenly  
And with a flash is gone.

It's hardly like a smile at all,  
More like a blinding light  
That darts across the starless sky—  
A fire-fly of the night.

## DRESSING UP

I SEE her coming down the winding stair  
With trailing petticoat and feathered fan.  
The ribbon binding up her golden hair  
Is blue. She wears a mauve shawl from Japan.

No light of recognition in her eyes,  
She greets me with a curtsy. As she nears,  
Her every gesture, measured, slow, denies  
The unbroken tyranny of her six years.

We play that she is hostess—I, her guest.  
And now she asks me how I take my tea. . . .  
O, tiny fledgeling, weary of the nest! . . .  
“Two lumps and cream” I say—as brave as she.

## LULLABY

COME sleep. Her heart's a wood-anemone.

Her thoughts are swallows flown  
Across the dusk. Her hair's a willow tree

By the west wind blown.

Her eyes are pools where bubbles rise and break—

Dream-bubbles from the deep—

Her soul's a moth that flutters in their wake.

Come sleep. . . . Come sleep.







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